

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 000728

SIPDIS

NSC FOR CBARTON  
USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD  
STATE PASS USAID FOR DCHA/OTI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/03/2014  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [VE](#)  
SUBJECT: THE OPPOSITION'S NEGOTIATING DILEMMA

REF: A. CARACAS 716

[1](#)B. CARACAS 717

Classified By: Abelardo A. Arias, Political Counselor, for  
Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

-----  
Summary  
-----

[1](#)1. (C) The Democratic Coordinating Committee (DCC) is negotiating with National Electoral Council (CNE) Director Jorge Rodriguez to design a workable appeals process ("reparo") for regaining the signatures petitioning a presidential recall referendum not initially accepted by the CNE. The DCC wants to have full international observer presence, expand the time period to at least three days, ensure the computer system is capable and fraud-proof, and restore signatures that were rejected for missing signature forms and tally sheets. The DCC is also fighting to maintain internal agreement on whether even to negotiate with the CNE, with NGOs and Henrique Salas Romer the notable holdouts. End summary.

-----  
DCC Negotiating With CNE  
-----

[1](#)2. (C) Poloff met on March 3 with Democratic Coordinating Committee (DCC) representatives Enrique Naime, Amado Dounias, and Daniel Thiman, who are operational officials for the DCC. Naime, who is the principal opposition witness for the signature verification process, confirmed that Miranda State Governor Enrique Mendoza and Movement to Socialism (MAS) party chief Felipe Mujica met twice with CNE Director Jorge Rodriguez on March 3 to negotiate a feasible process to re-affirm or challenge the signatures in support of a presidential recall (ref a). Naime, MAS party official Nelson Rampersaad, and OAS and Carter Center representatives also attend the negotiations. Naime said the DCC is dedicated to maintaining the "democratic route" to the referendum. Rodriguez confirmed publicly on March 3 that the conversations had been "very positive" and will continue over the next few days.

[1](#)3. (C) Opposition advisor Ana Julia Jartar had a more negative assesment of the the negotiations, claiming that Rodriguez would not change &anything8 concerning previously announced rules and regulations governing the reparo. The Ambassador told her to recognize this as a standard hard-line opening position in negotiations that should not defer the opposition from negotiating.

[1](#)4. (C) The CNE announced preliminary results of the signature count on March 2 in which the opposition fell some 600,000 signatures short of the 2.4 million threshold required by the constitution. Rodriguez publicly offered the opposition on March 2 an opportunity to discuss the design of the appeals process ("proceso de reparos" in Spanish). Naime said that opposition spokespersons Julio Borges and Antonio Ledezma failed to give the DCC's consensus opinion that the opposition wanted a couple of days to study the CNE's preliminary decision before agreeing to negotiate.

[1](#)5. (C) Dounias said the DCC asked the CNE for a database of the preliminary results for study. The DCC will request that signatures that were voided due to missing forms or lost tally sheets be reintegrated into the count of valid signatures. Also, they will insist that all signatures go to the appeals process regardless of the reason for exclusion. Dounias said the DCC will ask for more technical specifications on how the computer system used to register appeals will work, which will determine how many days -- they would like at least three days for now though the rules dictate five -- or centers are needed to ensure the appeals process offers a chance at victory. (Note: The Carter Center told the Ambassador on March 3 that the opposition and CNE Director Rodriguez would meet on March 5 to discuss the statistical results. The opposition submitted 3.4 million signatures; the figure announced March 2 by CNE President

Carrasquero totals 3.1 million.)

16. (C) Opposition advisor Fernando Martinez Mottola told the Ambassador March 3 that 10,000 computers would be needed, not the 2,700 currently planned for. He also lamented possible logistical problems for the computers: power source, computer paper, Internet access, and the hardware itself. The Ambassador added that Carter Center representatives told him March 2 that there was not enough time to secure and load the proper software.

-----  
Internal Conflicts Plague DCC  
-----

17. (C) Naime acknowledged that the DCC is split on whether to negotiate with the CNE after its unfair treatment of the forms with similar handwriting ("planillas planas" in Spanish). Naime said that Gente de Petroleo leader Juan Fernandez had "gone crazy" with his refusal to negotiate with the CNE. The three representatives agreed that the NGOs in the DCC are most opposed to negotiating with the GOV, convinced the GOV is readying a trap that will cause the opposition to fail. Political parties largely favor negotiations. AD Secretary General Henry Ramos, said Naime, has agreed to participate in the appeals process if the DCC negotiates a "feasible" process.

18. (C) Thiman noted that the conflict of opinion within the DCC reflects that of Venezuelan society over the CNE decision. The representatives denied they were coordinating street demonstrations throughout Venezuela, insisting the protests are spontaneous. Thiman said Saturday's march to the CNE headquarters is an attempt to channel frustration among their supporters.

19. (C) Martinez told the Ambassador that the internal reparo debate has significantly stressed opposition unity, both within the CD and the individual parties that make up the CD. He said a divide exists in the CD between people who want to abandon the recall process out of principle and those that wish to continue negotiating to gain international favor and bolster their democratic credentials. Both sides have no illusions about the recall process: Chavez will not allow it happen. The disagreement is over how to proceed. According to Martinez, the negotiators are led by Enrique Mendoza, COPEI, and MAS. Primero Justicia is supporting negotiations reluctantly, AD is split, and Proyecto Venezuela is opposed to negotiating further. Sumate staff look at the process through a technical, practical perspective, in which continuing with a failed process is illogical. The reparo puts us in a position where we are against our own people that see the reparo as technically impossible,8 Martinez said.

-----  
Enter Salas Romer  
-----

110. (C) Proyecto Venezuela head Henrique Salas Romer, they said, is acting "reborn" with his call for civil disobedience on March 3. They described Salas as a "populist" (Mendoza as a "statesman") who hopes the DCC will fail so that people support a military solution. Naime believes Salas is positioning himself to take over the opposition if the Mendoza and the DCC fail. (Salas told the PolCoun and Ambassador on March 2 that if the Coordinadora accepts a bad mechanism for going to reparos it will destroy the Coordinadora.)

-----  
Comment  
-----

111. (C) The pragmatists in the DCC are trying to reach a workable solution to keep the referendum process alive. We expect the CNE will meet some of the opposition's demands, but will try to make the process so onerous that they are unable to "repair" enough signatures to activate the recall. The rifts within the DCC will diminish if a feasible solution

is reached. Salas' distancing himself from the DCC is opportunistic but not surprising. He perceives the DCC as a vehicle for Mendoza and therefore an obstacle to his ambitions. Our message to Salas, to Mendoza, to Borges, and to other opposition leaders has been and continues to be that they must negotiate the best deal possible and then make it work.

SHAPIRO

NNNN